

## Manchester independent local radio licence applications

# Questions and responses: allTALK FM

*These are the responses received from allTALK FM to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding its application for the Manchester licence.*

### **1. Please explain any specific steps that were taken to ensure that interviewing for the Quantitative Format Study was not biased due to fieldwork taking place during the run up to Christmas 2004 (13-19th December) – normally a period avoided by market research companies.**

All MRS listed market research companies endeavour to avoid conducting interviews where the subject of the interview may be temporarily affected by outside influences and events (with the exception of research specifically designed to monitor such influences such as for example the recent wave of political opinion polls in the lead up to the general election).

The avoidance of interviewing in the period immediately prior to Christmas is often predicated by this legitimate desire to avoid bias. For example Customer Service Surveys at retail parks, or a survey on parking availability in a town centre, might reasonably be expected to be planned to avoid the unusual and temporary effects of the Christmas rush.

In the case of surveys, where the subject matter of which might reasonably be assumed to be unaffected by Christmas, the main reasons for the avoidance of pre-Christmas interviewing are:

- a) The difficulty of engaging interviewers to work at this time;
- b) The reduced response rate from busier than usual members of the public in the case of street / public place intercepts.

With regard to the Manchester research, First Surveys, by virtue of their extensive interviewer base, were able to engage sufficient numbers of experienced IQCS trained interviewers to conduct the 'Format Study' survey.

The survey, primarily due to its length, was conducted 'in home' at addresses in postcode sectors throughout the proposed TSA to strict quotas of age with gender, thus avoiding the low response rates of street intercepts at this particular time of year and also minimising interviewer selection bias.

The questionnaire did not test any issues which could conceivably be seasonally affected with perhaps the exception of 'Concerns About Religious & Moral Issues' which, at a time of year when it might be assumed to be at its peak in the public consciousness, recorded a low level of concern in line with the results from similar surveys conducted throughout the year.

Therefore in conclusion, we do not feel that there would be any bias incurred and therefore any requirement to take steps to avoid bias, given methodology and the questionnaire content.

**2. In the summary of the findings from the Format Study (pp46-47), results for the total sample have been provided. Please demonstrate the value of examining results at this total sample level, given the quota based nature of the sample.**

The 'Format Study' tested opinion on our target audience for a range of speech features on a new speech station, amongst adults aged 40+ as previously identified by our desk research (see pages 41-42 of the main application). In addition, we also included sampling amongst those aged 35-39 where our desk research had also indicated some interest in speech listening, as these adults will move into our core age group throughout the early years of the licence.

Following on from our exploratory Focus Group research, the Format Study was designed to test and quantify opinion about non-music programming preferences in order that we could be satisfied that our programme schedule is catering for the majority of tastes and interests and broadening choice within our target market. The study tested perceived current availability of news, information & features and preferred style and programme scheduling. This information helped to both shape our programme schedule and refine our concept card which was used to test the allTALK FM proposition in our later "reach" study.

The purpose of quota sampling by type of station "most often" listened to was to ensure we recruited sufficient numbers of listeners who had exposure to "speech content", either a pure speech format or a speech/music format, alongside those in the target age group who currently listen "most often" to music stations. In order to achieve this, the four hundred sample was recruited by fixed quotas of age with gender within each of five 'favourite station groups'. These station groups and the breakdown of sampling by age is included in Appendix 1.

The data therefore lends itself to sub group analysis. However, the main purpose of the format study was test the overall desire, preferences and perceived level of coverage from existing stations for the various features and programming items researched. As highlighted from our desk research, the 40+audience accounts for almost 82% of all speech listening, with little of this in the commercial sector. The format study therefore was principally designed to understand the sort of speech features and content that would attract the majority of listeners to the new station, rather than specifically looking at the individual sub sector responses. Each of the five station groups provided 20% of the base, so as to allow sufficient 'station group' sub-sample to permit broad analysis (typically 95%+/- 15%) and comparison with other station groups, if required.

A number of issues which emerged from the Format Study were later tested across the total 15+ adult audience in our Reach Study with the results suggesting that the Format study painted a fair picture of the research findings and bolsters the decision to use full sample extracts with the application document. This covered for instance;

Attitudes towards news	(Q5 Format Study, Q4 Reach Study)
Importance of selected features	(Q6 Format Study, Q8 Reach Study)
Programme ideas	(Q10-11 Format Study, Q9 Reach Study)
Balance of news coverage	( Q15 Format Study, Q5 Reach Study)

A set of weighted data tables and a copy of the full 'Format Study Executive Summary' from First Surveys are available to Ofcom on request.

**3. In Stage Four of the research programme (Establishing the Demand, pp49-52), were any quotas set on the sample regarding consumers' preferred format from a music station (e.g. music only, speech only or mixed music/speech)?**

No. The Reach Study was designed to establish demand across the total 15+ adult audience across the TSA, as required by Ofcom (See Manchester advertisement, Question 2 d (ii), Projections for listenership ratings over the first three years of the service). While we know allTALK FM is likely to attract a core listenership of 40+ adults, our programme schedule, as highlighted in our application will be broad and inclusive offering something for everyone some of the time. It is key therefore for financial business planning that we understand the total adult reach across the TSA against which advertisers and their agencies will plan and allocate budgets.

Weighted tables were supplied to Ofcom in support of the licence application. A copy of the full 'Potential Reach Study Executive Summary' report from First Surveys is available to Ofcom on request.

**4. TWG's directors are currently in exclusive discussions with UTV over a potential offer to take over TWG. If known, please describe how any change of ownership might affect this application in particular, or the merged group's radio strategy in general.**

If the takeover deal is concluded, the enlarged group will have significant radio assets throughout the UK and Eire. This will strengthen the new group's expansion strategy and its ability to develop new local and regional licences. We do not envisage any change to the group's desire to develop a network of local speech licences across the UK.